

Report to the Board of Trustees

February 2, 2022

From the Director

January began with a surge of new COVID cases, and our first major snowstorm of the year.

Our fall appeal continued to generate donations. To date, we have raised over \$57,000 in contributions, exceeding the budget of \$55,000 for the year. Congratulations to Katy for all of her efforts, and to the Trustees and staff for all of their support. Looking back to 2013, before we had a dedicated development program, the annual contributions totaled \$24,000 for the year. We've come a long way!

Trustee Michelle Blank, Katy and I met to discuss how we will tackle writing the Strategic Framework. We developed a plan that will have the team meeting on Mondays beginning January 31 to identify the pillars/drivers and strategic initiatives with a goal of completing the framework by June. We also have a staff in-service day planned for Friday, February 18 to present the results of the Community Deep Needs Analysis to our staff.

The Finance Committee met this month to develop the FY 2023 budget, a process that has gone smoothly this year, thanks to the efforts of a cohesive team, including our



A brief power outage was an opportunity to capture this eerie scene. Photo by Jen Payne.

Business Manager, Kathy Oxsalida, and our RTM representative, trustees, first selectman and Town finance director.

Due to increasing cases of COVID via the Omicron variant, the jazz concert scheduled for the beginning of the month was postponed. However, numbers fell almost as quickly as they rose, and we decided to go forward with the Saturday movie at the end of the month...which was then cancelled as a major

blizzard hit the Northeast.

Thanks to the Town of Branford, we became a distribution point for N95 masks, along with the Willoughby Wallace Library and Community Center. Having these masks so readily available gave us all a great boost of confidence in our work with the public.

Karen Jensen

**SAVE THE
DATE**
JUNE 25,
2022

Planning is underway for our 125th Anniversary Birthday Bash. Enjoy a day with family programs, a time capsule, dancing and refreshments!

Highlights from the Youth Services Department—December

December has brought the department back into the swing of things. Our outreach has increased and it's nice to be able to visit, read and talk about what the library does outside of the building. We are continuing our monthly visits to the Family Resource Center and were able to drop off our winter programming calendar in hope of bringing new families into our space. Sliney School also reached out to us. The school media specialist is working on a PreK visit in the near future and wanted to ensure that all of her students had library cards so that they can check out materials when they visit. The Youth Services staff completed a handful of cards and dropped them back off at Sliney School. We look forward to meeting this new class sometime next month.

We extended our monthly storytime outreach to the Branford Early Learning Center (BELC) since they are also a School Readiness site, similar to the Family Resource Center. The Blackstone Library sits on the School Readiness Council and assists when it comes to program planning, like the annual Pre-school Fair, and helps with grant writing and decision making. School Readiness PreKs are NAEYC accredited and receive state funds to provide free PreK seats to families in need. Statistics have shown that the early years are the most important in building the framework for lifelong learning. That is why Birth to Three services are so

critical and can make all the difference when children transition to school. Since both schools are School Readiness sites I wanted to offer our services equally and am now reading to each BELC classroom once a month. For December we read about gingerbread men which worked out perfectly since they were making gingerbread houses the day that I dropped in.

Finally, we were asked to present during Back to School night at Walsh Intermediate School for English language learning families. The event was hosted by the ELL and English Departments and specifically for new families so that they could learn about services in their community. Presenters included: The Community Dining Room, School Based Healthcare, Park & Rec and more. The school provided a nice introduction and then everyone had 3 to 5 mins to present on their organization. I brought library card forms as well as programming calendars so that families had information to bring home. One of the nicest parts about the evening was that a translator was present. In a great number of ELL family cases the children are receiving services through school while the parents are working so finding free time to learn English is limited. Many times their children become their main source of communication. Setting up this event in this fashion creates a level of comfort and makes it possible to connect

since parents have a translator on hand for questions and clarifications.

The Youth Services Department planned a variety of fun events during winter break and they all filled with ease. Our first hybrid program was a success—a group of eight met in-person and the rest through ZOOM were able to watch a presentation by the Denison Pequotsepos Nature Center on winter animal survival. We then created winter woodland ornaments as a group to provide a hands-on component to the program. Miss Sarah helped the participants in the building while I worked with the group ZOOMing in from home.

We also partnered with Sweets on Main to create an Ugly Sweater Cookie Decorating contest. The bakery donated cookies and we bought a variety of delicious decorations. The program was a fun way for families to come together. Seeing as the holidays are pretty busy we decided to run the program offsite. Families had a total of three days to pick up their cookies and had to report back with their creations (a picture, by email.) by New Years Eve. We actually have not done a contest of this magnitude before and to have such a steadfast response was delightful. Maybe we will have to plan something fun in the spring!

Carly Lemire



Thank you to Sweets on Main for donating cookies for our contest!

Highlights from the Reference Department-December

This past year was another challenging one as we all continued to deal with an uncertain and ever-changing world. I think that one of our strengths as a library is the ability to adapt to changing circumstances and continue to provide exemplary service to our patrons. This year we offered a wide range of programs (still mainly remote, but with the occasional in-person program), added classes and book groups, purchased new laptops to give patrons more options for Internet access anywhere in the building or grounds, added new databases, continued offering contact-free pickup, and continued our homebound delivery service.

Christina (with Brendan and

Katy) hosted in-person tech help sessions both at the library and at the Senior Center and had many one-on-one tech help appointments. Jenna continued posting our 125th anniversary facts, has scheduled some great programs and we are all looking forward to our 125th celebration this June.

We have made a lot of progress with our various digital archives projects. Christina has resolved a number of technical challenges for our Community Webs site and we will be publicizing that soon. Jenna finished organizing and indexing the library's institutional archives and will begin scanning those so that we can add them to our online col-

lection. We are digitizing local history articles and have begun scanning the BHS yearbooks. Brendan is working on a full inventory of our Ella Wheeler Wilcox holdings. Debby is working on a master genealogy index (currently at 35,000+ entries) so that we are able to readily identify the many resources that we have in-house when we receive a genealogy inquiry. We are considering a number of possible subjects to add exhibits to our Digital Archives site and will continue to add photo collections. We are all enjoying the wide variety of projects we are fortunate to be able to work on and we look forward to sharing them with our patrons and our colleagues.

Deb Trofatter

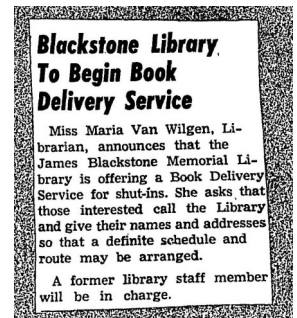
The History of Homebound Service

The Blackstone Library offers a wide variety of services to the people of Branford and while the services we offer change with the needs of our community, one of our most popular services recently turned 54 years old! A recent 125th Anniversary Fact celebrated our Homebound Delivery Service. This special delivery service debuted in November of 1968 and was designed to provide books and other library materials to

community members who were confined to their homes. Over the years, deliveries have been made by both librarians and volunteers, and today SARAH Inc. delivers books, audiobooks, and other materials twice a month to our current group of homebound patrons. Do you know someone who can't leave their home, either permanently or temporarily, who could benefit from book deliveries? Give us a call in the

Reference Department to learn more! (203) 488-1441 ext. 318.

Jenna Anthony



Miss Van Wilgen announces homebound service in 1968!



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...more than books

Join our email list for more information about programs
www.blackstonelibrary.org

February 2021 Program Highlights

English Conversation Group

Tuesdays at 10:00 – 11:00 am in our Conference Room

Wednesdays 4-5:00 pm Zoom

For ESOL (English Speakers of Other Languages) adults. For more information and to register, contact Kathleen McKenna of Literacy Volunteers at 203-285-2621 or kmckenna@lvaghn.org.

Afternoon of Classical Music

February 5 @ 3:30 - 4:30 pm

Join violinist Ilana Zaks for an afternoon of music featuring composers Tartini, Paganini, Coleridge Taylor Perkinson and more! **IN PERSON.** *Sponsored by the Friends of the Blackstone Library.*

Bicycle Craze to Auto Age

February 9, 6:30 - 8:00 pm

Why was it said that before there was a Detroit, there first had to be a Hartford? How did bicycle improvements help usher in the Auto Age? What international auto

contest in Branford was drawing William K. Vanderbilt II and his fellow elites from their Newport mansions? The answers may surprise you! **IN PERSON.** *Presented by Ted Braun and the Branford Historical Society.*

Drop-in Tech Session

February 10 @ 2:00 - 4:00 pm

Confused about your new iPhone or iPad? Need help formatting a Word document? Drop in to the library to have your tech questions answered. First come, first served. Sessions limited to 15 minutes per person. **IN PERSON** – Registration not required.

The Nature of Mindful Living and Eating

February 12 @ 2:00 - 3:30 pm

You'll learn the basics of mindful living and eating from Marlow Shami, participate in an activity and guided

meditation, and have a chance to ask questions and share experiences. **ONLINE.** *Sponsored by the Friends of the Blackstone Library.*

Permeable Boundaries:

A Virtual Author Event

February 19 @ 2:00 - 3:00 pm

MaryEllen Beveridge returns with her latest collection of short stories, in which the protagonists find themselves living outside cultural mores and expectations as they confront the central questions of their lives. **ONLINE.**

Virtual Branford Forum:

History of American Cuisine

February 20 @ 2:00 - 3:30 pm

ONLINE.

Best Seller Book Club

February 26 @ 3:30 - 4:30 pm

This month we're reading *The Family* by Naomi Krupitsky. Register and choose to participate **ONLINE** or **IN PERSON.**

Programs require registration—see our website at blackstonelibrary.org

December 2021 Statistics—Deirdre Santora

Total Circulation: 6,393

December 2020: 3,867

borrowIT: 1,347

December 2020: 833

Renewals: 4,318

Computer Sessions: 487

WIFI Logins: 2840

Facebook: 2033 Likes

Instagram: 1077 Followers

MailChimp: 7539

Downloadable Circulation:

Overdrive ebooks: 1,542

Overdrive audiobooks: 774

Overdrive Magazines: 165

HOOPLA: 990

Kanopy: 405

Pronunciator: 583

Ancestry Library: 1148

New Haven Register: 148

Creative Bug: 9

Total Downloadable: 5,764

Children's Programs

34 programs/276 attendance

Teen Programs (12+)

13 programs/39 attendance

Adult programs

25 programs/288 attendance

Lucy Hammer Room & Conference Room

139 meetings/347 attendees

Average Daily Visitors: 252

Days Open: 28